

LESSON 26: Business Performance

Leading Like a Good Shepherd

One of the many paradoxes in Scripture is how God uses “the Good Shepherd” as the analogy of choice for an ideal leader. One of our first glimpses into being a good shepherd is Moses.

Moses was raised in Pharaoh’s home, so he had been taught that shepherds were despised by the Egyptians. Yet, God chose to prepare Moses to lead hundreds of thousands of grumbling Israelites by training him as a shepherd for 40 years.

Likewise, King David was also prepared for leadership by being trained as a shepherd. Most importantly, Jesus labeled Himself as the “Good Shepherd.” As business owners striving to lead our businesses in the most profitable and effective way, it’s helpful to have this model of leadership.

GOOD SHEPHERDS AND LEVEL 5 LEADERS

So, what does a “Good Shepherd” look and act like in today’s world? To answer that question, I believe we can compare the attributes of leaders in scripture like Moses and Jesus to the attributes proven as effective in some valid business research.

After researching thousands of organizations, “Good to Great,” written by Jim Collins, described a great leader as what he called a Level 5 Leader. When we examine the leadership styles of Moses and Jesus these same qualities are affirmed in Scripture as well.

When you boil down the attributes Collins discovered within a Level 5 Leader, he identified six qualities that we can all aspire to attain. Each of these six qualities are also important to the “Good Shepherd’s” we examined in Scripture.

COLLINS' SIX ATTRIBUTES IN LEVEL 5 LEADERS

1. **Humility** | While many conventional leaders model pride and arrogance, the Good Shepherd is humble. One of the findings that surprised Jim Collins and his team was the prevalence of humility in great leaders. They believed that the bigger than life proud and boisterous leaders would be the ones leading the great companies. Instead, they discovered that the almost shy, but strong, leaders were often the greatest. These leaders were often unknown to the public because they pushed their team out front for the accolades, instead of hogging the spotlight themselves. Moses was known as the humblest man on earth at the time and Jesus certainly modeled humility as the One equal to God who served others as a servant leader. Scripture and research both point to the importance of this quality of humility.
2. **Ask for Help** | Humility also surfaces in our willingness to seek help and advice from others. As followers of Jesus we first need to be humble enough to pursue God's will and wisdom. But we also need to realize that God has made each person with unique skills, abilities, and knowledge. We should desire the wisdom of others especially in their areas of expertise, because a humble person realizes that others have wisdom and experiences we may not. The best wisdom Moses obtained came from his father-in-law, Jethro, because Moses was willing to seek help and listen. Jim Collins' research discovered that great leaders do not presume they have all the answers. They wisely seek counsel from others.
3. **Take Responsibility** | When problems or mistakes surface in an organization many leaders look around for someone else to blame. But a Level 5 Leader, or a Good Shepherd, accepts responsibility for the actions of the team, rather than passing blame. When the Israelites sinned against God, rather than cast blame on them, Moses took responsibility for the sins of the people and begged for God's forgiveness. It would have been easy to blame them without taking responsibility personally. When Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees about His disciples' violation of the Sabbath laws, Jesus didn't lie or dodge responsibility, he accepted responsibility for His team while pointing out the flaw in the Pharisee's view of the law. Jim Collins' research also concluded that great leaders stood up for their team and accepted responsibility for any mistakes or wrongs that needed addressed.
4. **Develop Discipline** | Good to Great identified a quality that they labeled "indomitable will." They discovered that great leaders had a focus, discipline, and perseverance to accomplish their mission that was far beyond the conventional leader. Moses persevered through Pharaoh's constant rebuke while staying focused and disciplined on the mission God had given him to accomplish.

Likewise, Jesus made His mission very clear to His disciples and was relentless in accomplishing His goals even unto death. To become a Good Shepherd, we also need to be relentless and disciplined in carrying out God’s will and purpose for our organization and the cause God has given us to pursue.

- 5. **Find the Right People** | Jim Collins’ research discovered that great companies found and placed the right people “on the bus.” When Moses was overwhelmed judging thousands of cases, his father-in-law, Jethro, gave him sage advice on what qualities to look for in leaders that could share the burden. This wisdom served Moses well. Not surprisingly, Jesus selected some very unconventional leaders. Few would have selected the unique blend of experiences and personalities that Jesus handpicked, but ultimately those disciples laid down their life for Jesus’ mission, resulting in Christianity today being the largest religion on the planet, with over 2 billion followers.
- 6. **Lead with Passion** | Great leaders are driven by the purpose God has placed on their heart. Their passion for their cause becomes evident to all of those around them, leading others to follow passionately as well. Moses was so passionate for his cause of freeing the Israelites from slavery that he at first went about it in the wrong manner by killing an Egyptian. Later, after 40 years of preparation, God used Moses’ passion to successfully free the Israelites from slavery. Additionally, Jesus was so passionate for His Father’s house that he drove the merchants out of the temple. Likewise, as Good Shepherds we should be driven by the passion we have for the cause we are pursuing. Our passion is important in passing it on to others so that we enlist those around us in helping with our cause.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Discuss your thoughts on the possible comparisons and contrasts between a Level 5 Leader and a Good Shepherd

- 2. Have you ever worked for a Good Shepherd? If so, what qualities do you remember admiring the most about them?

3. Think about the worst leader you've ever worked for. How did you feel working for them? What one or two things might they have done that would have dramatically improved their leadership results?

4. Out of the six attributes discussed above, how would you rank them in importance?

Are You a Good Shepherd?

If you see the value in the above leadership qualities, it may be valuable for your leadership development to assess how well you currently lead in each of these attributes then develop a game plan to improve in the areas in which you lack.

The following self-assessment tool can be a good starting point for providing some self-awareness of your strengths and weaknesses in these attributes. Answer as honestly as possible and consider sharing your results with your group to see if they would concur with your scores.

Bad Shepherd					Good Shepherd				
0	1	2	3	4	5				
Arrogant					Humble				
0	1	2	3	4	5				
Know it all					Asks for help				
0	1	2	3	4	5				
Passes blame					Takes responsibility				
0	1	2	3	4	5				
Undisciplined and unreliable					Disciplined & reliable				
0	1	2	3	4	5				
High turnover					Finds the right people				
0	1	2	3	4	5				
Driven by profit					Driven by passion				

Total your score _____

- 25-30 Excellent
- 19-24 Good
- 13-18 Needs Improvement
- 0-12 Bad Shepherd

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss with your group *their* perception of your score.

2. Discuss with your group what steps you can take to improve your scores. What commitments are you willing to make to your group to work on by next month?
